

HARVARD UNIVERSITY GAZETTE
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Kennedy School Panel Debates Links Between CIA, Academia

In an unprecedented public appearance at Harvard last week, the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) announced several policy changes in the CIA funding of academic research.

Robert Gates said that scholars in the future will be free to disclose CIA funding of research in work that is independently published unless the scholar requests privacy or the agency determines that the association of the CIA with the research topic is damaging to the United States. He also asserted that the CIA will not require prepublication review of material unless the scholar has had access to classified information.

"On December 3 of last year the *Boston Globe* stated, 'The scholar who works for a government intelligence agency ceases to be an independent spirit, a true scholar,'" Gates recalled before an audience at the Kennedy School. "These are strong words. In my view, they are absolutely wrong.

"We do not believe that working with your government to help bring about better informed policy is shameful; indeed, it should be source of pride and satisfaction," he declared. "Contributing to better understanding of some of the most difficult and occasionally dangerous problems of the world, in my view, is responsive to the scholar's highest calling."

Gates said CIA involvement with the academic community takes several forms, such as consultation (often under a contractual arrangement), the sponsorship of conferences, research, a scholars-in-residence program, and informal talks with scholars who have recently traveled to places or participated in events abroad.

The working relationship between scholars and the CIA has recently been in the news, focusing in one case on Harvard's Professor Nadav Safran, Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), who negotiated two contracts with the agency. The contracts involved CIA sponsorship of a conference held by the CMES in October on Muslim politics and religion, and support of Safran's research for his recently published book on Saudi Arabia.

Responding to Gates' address, Joseph

Nye, Dillon Professor of International Affairs, commended the CIA for policy changes involving sponsorship issues.

"We have just heard a bureaucracy move, and that doesn't happen very often," said Nye, another speaker at the forum. "I would regard tonight's speech as a truly major speech."

Nye, who has been asked to serve as a consultant to the CIA in the past and has declined to sign an agreement granting the CIA prepublication review of his writings, said scholars are faced with "conflicting obligations" when they participate in government-sponsored research. Allowing scholars to disclose the CIA as sponsor of their research may help relieve some that conflict.

"We have an obligation as a citizens to the security of our country and as scholars we have the obligation to put truth before power," he explained. "There is a simple keystone principle that helps us sort through these contradictions and that principle is openness. If [research] can't be done openly then it doesn't belong in the academy."

John Shattuck, Vice President for Government, Community and Public Affairs, agreed with Nye in saying that the CIA should conduct research of classified information in-house. The University "cannot sanction classified research without surrendering its integrity," he said.

"The University is nothing if it is not an open and unregulated forum where information and ideas are exchanged, debated, criticized, amended, joined, and separated," Shattuck explained. "This means in general that the fruits of scholarship should not be restricted, censored or classified."

Citing the First Amendment, Shattuck said that freedom of association makes it particularly important for scholars to be allowed to disclose the source of funding for research.

"If scholars are found to be engaging in secret research, it calls into question not only the objectivity of the scholar but the objectivity of his or her colleagues," he explained. "No doubt the CIA needs access to academia, but it needs to understand that the pressures it puts on scholars can

have a terrible negative impact, destroying the most important assets universities have to offer—their objectivity and independence."

Shattuck took issue with Gates's assertion that the CIA would insist on keeping secret its sponsorship of academic research when "public association of the CIA with a specific topic would prove damaging to the United States."

Shattuck said, however, "That's a broad exception to the principle of openness that would harm academic freedom."

Gates challenged the idea that conducting secret research for the CIA can undermine academic freedom.

"When we contract for research, we insist on honest work," the Deputy Director explained. Our research and analysis must stand up to close scrutiny, not only by other intelligence agencies, but by other elements of the executive branch.

"American academics have long consulted with officials of foreign governments of all stripes," he added. "In light of this, singling out a U.S. government agency as a particular threat to honest inquiry represents a double standard, if not outright hypocrisy. You are rightly proud of your ability to do objective research. The CIA does not threaten it."

Tracing the history of the CIA, Gates noted that several former Harvard professors have been involved with the agency, including historian William L. Langer, who served as Director of Research in the 1940s, and Robert Amory, a law professor who was named Deputy Director for Intelligence in 1952.

Although ties between the CIA and academia waned in the 1960s following the Bay of Pigs expedition, said Gates, the relationship has improved in recent years. He attributes this improvement to the support of area and regional studies, and foreign language studies by the CIA as well the Departments of State and Defense.

"There is one constant in the history of this relationship and its future: our need for your help and the opportunity you have to contribute to a better informed policymaking process by cooperating with us," Gates said. "The federal government needs to have recourse to the best minds in the country, including those in the academic community. Tensions inevitably accompany the relationship between defense, intelligence, and academia, but mutual need and benefit require reconciliation or elimination of such tensions."



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Robert Gates of the CIA makes a point as Harvard's John Shattuck looks on.